

THE BOOK OF THE WEEK'S BOOKS OUTPUT

Three Unusual Novels Are Written by Three Englishmen of Ability English Reviews of Recent Books

Two Benson Brothers Bring Out "None Other Gods" and "Juggernaut" and Leonard Merrick Depicts Stage Life Realistically.

LATTER WORK TOO TRUE TO BE A "BEST SELLER"

By James L. Ford.

Three Englishmen who, each in a different way, are writing rather unusual novels of a kind seldom produced in this country, are Robert Hugh Benson, D. F. Benson and Leonard Merrick. The two Benson brothers are the sons of the late Archbishop of Canterbury, a fact that seems rather surprising considering that the first named is now a Catholic priest, and his brother, although brought up under the influence of the best English ever written, has not yet learned not to say "had awoke" and is still struggling with the subjunctive mood. Mr. Merrick, whose work I have frequently been glad to praise in this page, is beginning to receive the recognition that he should have had long years ago. In the books of all three writers the quality of interest is noticeable in a remarkable degree.

Father Benson is the author of "None Other Gods" (Hutchinson & Co., London), a book that deserves to be far better known in this country than it is. That it will never enjoy wide popularity is not its fault, but that of our reading public, which is notorious for its habit of absorbing literature through the elbow instead of the brain. There is another fact that will militate against the success of this novel, and that is that it steadily combats all accepted ideas as to what is worth having and working for.

Frank Guiton is a young Cambridge graduate, who has just turned Catholic. It is worth noting here that Father Benson has all the zeal of a recent convert, and therefore full attitude must be expected. He is not the subject of religion, Frank, finding himself disinterested, has an auction of all his effects, leaves college and takes to the road as a tramp, working when he can and sleeping in



FATHER HUGH BENSON, MR. LEONARD MERRICK, D.F. BENSON

burns and hay mows when he has not the price of lodging. He does this with an altruistic hope of studying the submerged tenth and perhaps bettering it. He has not journeyed far before he falls in with a man and woman, tramping like himself, and the three continue their wanderings together. The man, whom he calls "the Major," is a rascally detestable who has been expelled from the army for cheating and his companion is a young woman, living with him as his wife, whom he bullies in the most approved British fashion in order that he may be tenderly loved. Frank soon realizes that the Major is not above petty thievery, and it is not long before the latter induces him to assume responsibility for one of his larcenous and go to prison for fourteen days. It is such a foolish and unnecessary thing to do that, in our indignation, we are apt to forget the element of self sacrifice that makes the act beautiful.

Frank is engaged to a beautiful and sensible young girl, the daughter of the village rector, who dwells at his father's park gates and is very popular with the Earl and all their friends. In a suitably match and he is deeply in love with her, but, once started on his wanderings, he neglects to write to her or to send her his address. But he writes to a friend of his prison experience and bids him tell the girl. He is amazed to receive from her a letter in which she breaks off the engagement and frankly gives him her reasons—reasons which struck me as excellent.

I will remark here that Father Benson seems to be well aware of the fact that most altruistic persons are more occupied in thinking of themselves and their schemes than of their friends and relatives.

Meanwhile the young man has become obsessed with the idea that it is his duty to save the other girl from the clutches of the man with whom she is travelling and to bring her back to the country which she was taken. That is why he re-

turns home as a penitent or else accepts the hospitality of his dearest friend. For a time he labors with the woman in vain, but at last she agrees to go if he will provide her with some new clothes. He does this by pawing the few articles of value that remain to him and takes her himself to the door of her home, where her mother is waiting to receive her. Then he returns and courageously faces the Major, that he may tell him what he has done.

It is not a book with a "happy ending" in the ordinary sense of the term, but it has at least an enlightening finish, for it is not until we reach the last chapter that we find out which of the two girls is the one we have taken him for, it is really a consistently earnest and high minded young man, who is doing his duty as he sees it and as a cost to himself he is difficult to read to the point where he is argued that the girl was not worth saving, but the same could be said of the thief on the cross.

I recommend this book to thoughtful persons, and none others.

"Juggernaut" (William Heinemann) is by E. F. Benson and deals with a young girl of the wholesome attractive imaginative English type, who has been brought up by her aunt, Mrs. Morrison, an avowed character, evidently drawn from life.

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the business of theatricals, and, although viewing it from a different and less solid angle, he makes an extremely interesting and vivid story.

Christopher Tatum, a young man with really brilliant but dependent on no uncle for his bite and sup, wishes to become an actor and struggles manfully to succeed. He climbs the stairs of theatrical agencies day after day, inserts and answers advertisements in the list, plays a small part now and then in a cheap travelling company and does his best to get on in a profession that is woefully overcrowded. Finally he gives up the struggle and accepts a position as clerk in his uncle's office. Then he tries his hand at play-writing and finally fails, for the wretched sum of £15, all his rights in a piece called "London Inside Out," a cheap and tawdry melodrama which makes a fortune for its purchaser. He falls in love with a young actress, Peggy Harper, and they become engaged, but are unable through lack of means to get married.

Finally Peggy attracts the attention of a famous dramatist and obtains a part in a West End play. She makes a tremendous hit, straightway acquires what is known as a "well head" and, as a quite natural result, the engagement between the pair is broken. This leaves Tatum free to marry another woman on whom he has already set his heart, and in the end we find him happily married and the author of successful comedies.

The book is remarkable for its keen insight into the theatrical world and character. Peggy Harper is splendidly drawn. There is a scene in which the dramatist goes over her part with her and prepares her for the triumph which she achieves on her opening night—a scene which is never reached, the point of their ambition. There is a scene in which the dramatist of the stage and is rich in exquisite humor and satire. Admirable also is the description of that triumph, her reception by the public and critics, the jealousy of her associates and the effect of the triumph on her own character. Brilliantly as he describes a stage success, Mr. Merrick is no less effective in his handling of its failures, and there is deep pathos in his sketches of the two girls who live honest and never reach the goal of their ambition. I should be glad to see this novel widely read, not alone because of its own merits, but because of the lesson that it teaches: yet I very much fear that its author has too few illusions in regard to the stage to produce a "best seller."

"Mafield," by Vincent Brown (Chapman), deals with the vexed question of divorce, but not from the usual standpoint. The London Literary World says of it: "It is the question of divorce as it affects the working classes that forms the centre of Mafield, and round it are made to revolve characters and incidents that keep the story attractively moving until the end is reached in well approved melodramatic fashion. The reader is troubled by no subtle disquisitions, nor is the action delayed by any exercise of the author's descriptive faculty. Everything is naive and straightforward, and people who hold that an exciting, everyday tale is the thing will be well pleased."

"The Shadow of the Guillotine," by E. Scott Gillette (Long), is a well written story of the French Revolution upon which the London Literary World bestows this praise:—"The author has the power of vivid writing. Her men and women are alive, and she has successfully reproduced the atmosphere in which they live and move. It is a rather daring experiment to make a heroine of very aristocratic pretensions fall in love with a plebeian in those very exclusive days. And it says a good deal for Miss Gillette's skill in working out her plot that she invariably carries us along with her, and our sympathies are all the while with the low born lover."

Mr. Joseph Conrad's recent story of Russian life, "Under Western Eyes" (Methuen), gets a good notice in the London Academy:—"Mr. Conrad is a great stylist. His latest book is written in fresh and vivid language, with powerful vision and an extraordinary subtlety in the portrayal of emotions. Even Mr. Conrad cannot fathom the unfathomable, and he does not solve for us the mystery of the Russian character. Motive and action are finely pointed in character studies of masterly drawing and finish. The psychology is marvellous."

EARLY VIEWS OF AMERICA.

In "The Russells of Birmingham" (George Allen) we have the story of the Russell family of Birmingham, who travelled through England, France and America at the turn of the eighteenth century and met with many adventures. The book has been compiled from diaries and family papers and the period of which it treats is from 1781 to 1814. The Birmingham riots and the burning and pillage of Dr. Priestley's house are described here in full, as is the French Revolution as seen by this adventurous family. But more interesting to American readers are the descriptions of this country, to which they came in 1781. In the same ship was a Mr. Astor, of whom no details are given in the diary save that he was "a New York gentleman, married and evidently of substantial position." Fever was raging in New York at the time of their arrival and they started at once for Philadelphia in their own Parisian coach drawn by four hired horses. The road was terrible. "For miles it was made of logs laid in the swamp and loosely covered with stones and soil. New York was reached in the evening, and the scene was illuminated with the sun's parting rays." The Russells journeyed through the eastern part of America and their descriptions are most interesting information about the social and physical conditions that they found here as well as tables of current prices for supplies. On the whole, a rather interesting narrative for the student of American history.

The public has recently been deluged with biographies of royalties, both ancient and modern. One of the latest of these is "The Beloved Princess," by Charles E. Pearce (S. Paul), in which the subject is

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"His Rise in Power" Shows Common Sense in Politics

Mr. Henry Russell Miller, whose first novel, "The Man Higher Up," attracted immediate attention, has gone himself one better, as it were, with his second, "His Rise in Power," just issued by Bobbs-Merrill. As a young novelist at the beginning of his career, Mr. Miller will bear watching. He has something to say and he knows how to say it. Of course, there are many persons who do not care for politics in their fiction, and that is the theme of both his books, but those who are at all concerned with the welfare of the country will find in his pages food for serious thought. This is the story of John Dunmeade, a young lawyer in a small town the exact location of which is left in doubt. He is taken up by the party "boss," Senator Murchell, and nominated for District Attorney, but John is a man of ideals, and at the inauguration meeting he amazes and angers his supporters by announcing that if elected he will go his own way. In spite of this and the movement that is begun against him, he is elected, and immediately he sets on foot a campaign to send a group of grafters to jail. Then comes the conflict between his aspirations and the conditions that surround him. He finds that the people for whom he is striving are hopelessly inert, content to be ruled; but he keeps up his work in the face of the most bitter discouragement. In the end he is forced to compromise, and that is where Mr. Miller shows his wisdom. No one man can reform social or political conditions, nowaday. Perhaps the best part of the story is that which deals with his love for Katherine Hampden. She returns his love, but says frankly that she will marry only a man who has achieved high position, irrespective of ideals. He is strong enough to hold out, and puts her aside until the time comes when she learns her error, and all ends well, with John the Governor of the State. The story has vigor and thought in every line, although it would be vastly improved by a touch of humor, a quality which it lacks altogether.

What promises to prove a notable work is announced by the publisher, The Catholic Church in the United States, described as a complete and exhaustive history of the establishment and growth of Catholicism in this country. The edition will be in two volumes, the first volume to the College of Cardinals of Archbishop O'Connell and will be in eight volumes, illustrated. Begun five years ago, with the sanction and benediction of the Pope, the history represents the work of more than six thousand collaborators, including some of the most prominent dignitaries of the Church in this country and heads of the religious orders. It covers the activities of the Church from the landing of the first missionaries to the present day. It describes graphically the trials of the early missionaries among the aborigines; portrays the struggle for recognition and the rights of free worship in communities settled by other religious organizations and shows step by step the succeeding chapter in the marvelous evolution of the American branch of the Church from a body of comparative insignificance to an institution of commanding importance. In its scope the work is the most complete presentation of the power and influence of the Church and the magnitude of its secular potentialities ever undertaken in the United States, and it is intended for non-Catholics as well as for Catholics as an authoritative account of its accomplishments on this continent. Its value in this respect has been recognized already by the principal non-Catholic theological seminaries of the country, which have applied for the work for their libraries. The policy outlined by the editors at the inception of the work of eliminating everything of a dogmatic character likely to provoke controversy or impair the value of it to the student, scholar, future historian or layman has been adhered to carefully in its preparation.

Students of the race question may find significance in "The Quest of the Silver Fleece" (A. C. McClurg & Co.), by William E. Burghardt Do Bois. The story is laid in the South and in Washington, and depicts not only the struggles, often against impossible odds, of the negro who aspires to develop his personality, but shows the economic roots of many of the injustices which stand between him and the open sky of real freedom. Bless Alwyn, the heroic boy who is the central figure of the tale, and Zora, the mysterious girl, who, a young girl, who yet possesses an intellect which seems to have been sharpened rather than dimmed by the untutored mysticism of youth from race prejudice and wrongs.

MR. WELLS' NEW VOLUME.

Mr. H. G. Wells has acquired such widespread popularity as a novelist that the public has forgotten, if it ever knew, that he was once a short story writer. His new book, "The Door in the Wall," gives evidence of his abilities in that direction in a new and a new era. There are eight of these short stories or sketches, superbly printed in very large type and illustrated by a number of beautiful photographs by Alvin Langdon Coburn. As a mere example of fine modern book-making, apart from its literary merit, the volume is well worth having. The story from which it takes its title is a bit of poetic symbolism of the real sort. It tells of a man who has won the highest honors in statecraft and who still looks back to a door in a wall through which he once peeped in childhood and saw a vision of peace and beauty. Several times during his life he has passed this door, but has always been too anxious or too hurried to stop and open it, and he dies at last without ever having found the peace and happiness that lie behind it.

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It was James Whitcomb Riley who "discovered" the late James Newton Matthews and proclaimed him as among the foremost of America's authentic poets. In view of this, a peculiar interest attaches to "The Lute of Life" (Horton & Co.), a collection of Matthews' writings, in which the Riley verdict seems to be amply vindicated. Here really is a new note, a distinctive method, without the usual unhappy concomitant of a daring disregard for the reasonable restrictions of art's authority. Riley enthusiasts will delight in the several special poems he has contributed to this volume, beginning with a characteristic "foreword" in the sonnet form and continuing through a series of brilliant metaphysical interchanges with comrades of Parnassus, between whom there existed a friendship unique in the annals of literary association. Walter Hurl also furnishes an "appreciation" of the dead poet, which is exquisite in its

kind. Mark Twain also was a great admirer of Matthew. "His songs," he said, "have lifted my spirit like a strong and helpful hand. Such poets are the world's best benefactors."

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mus seated amidst the foliage of a tree eating from a table, whilst a crow mounts a ladder to reach the top of the tree. The author goes into the question of the effect of the Assouan dam upon the buildings on the island of Philae and decides that the more fact of their being under water for five months of the year will not damage them, which is a most reasonable conclusion.

Mr. George Bird Grinnell, editor of Forest and Stream, and well known in the literary world by his books on the American Indian, is of the opinion that there is little better worth a young American's reading than the histories of the early explorers of our country. In his "Trails of the Fathers" (Scribner's) he has given an account of some of those daring adventures, who, when everything west of the Alleghenies was unfamiliar and all beyond the Mississippi a wilderness, braved hardships and possible death in their wanderings. Some of these men were famous, like Alexander Henry, others, like Jonathan Carver and Alexander Mackenzie, were moved by the explorer's spirit. Then came the expedition of Lewis and Clark, sent out by President Jefferson to ascertain what kind of country had been obtained by the Louisiana Purchase. These two were the first Americans to traverse the continent, and they were soon followed by Zebulon Pike, the young soldier who first reached the sources of the Mississippi. These and a half dozen other explorers are the men of whom Mr. Grinnell has written in a most interesting way, quoting copiously from their own diaries and from contemporary accounts, now difficult of access. The perfect simplicity of the book is its charm. The reader picks it up and feels he is aware of it has turned page after page, following with breathless interest the adventures of those brave men who were unconsciously beginning our great territorial expansion.

When a poet begins writing and we begin liking his work, we are naturally inclined to think that he has not and cannot have got the compass of his talent. We must wait till he has written more and we have learned to like him more. In the case of Madison Cawein's "Poems" (Macmillan) time has proved that his verse is perennially fresh and beautiful in its expanding and maturing beauty. The selections which comprise this charming book of verse are wide in range and show the author's skill in handling various meters as well as his play of thought in the different media. In making the selections for this book Mr. Cawein has endeavored to cover the entire field of his poetical labors, which extend over a quarter of a century, and they present his most representative poetical work. There is a foreword by William Dean Howells.

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